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WORLD-POLITICS.

PARIS: WASHINGTON.

PARIS, *August, 1906.*

WE may hope that French politics will gradually become quite simple and intelligible, and no longer the nightmare of entanglement which they used to be. A few comprehensive questions and a knowledge of the political temperament of a few leading men ought soon to enable even the casual reader to form an accurate idea of the situation of this country. In fact, the present writer has never found it so easy a task as to-day to unite brevity with lucidity. Almost everything is said the moment we state that pure politics—that is to say, the private interests of a few individual deputies or Ministers,—are fast receding into the background and making room for all-important social questions.

The first week of the new legislature was entirely devoted to a debate—which some people may have been tempted to call “academic,” but which, in fact, was of preeminent practical interest—between Jaurès and M. Clémenceau. Nearly three hundred in the Chamber were elected as Socialists or Radical-Socialists, and Jaurès could well imagine himself the real leader of the majority. As a matter of fact, twenty or thirty questions which were to be put to the Minister of the Interior, M. Clémenceau, were brushed aside as insignificant, and the very question which was furnishing M. Jaurès his theme—the alleged rough handling by the Government of the Courrières strikers—was soon dismissed as secondary, and all the attention of the Chamber was centred on the one comprehensive question: Was the democracy to go on wasting her time and resources on anticlericalism and mock reforms, or were steps to be taken for the benefit of the working classes? The almost universal applause of the Chamber testified that the audience of the great Socialist orator was awake at last

to the necessity of entering a new field of parliamentary labor. Clearly a new leaf had been turned, and we were entering upon a new phase of the Revolution begun more than a century ago. Industrialism and democracy mean attention to the rights and possibilities of the millions, and the *prolétaires'* votes have been too long represented in Parliament without any advantage accruing to them from their so-called share in the government.

To put it in newspaper language, it appears evident that, during the next four years, nine out of ten questions mooted in the French Chamber will have Jaurès or one of his lieutenants as their exponents; and whenever no other solution can be propounded, the Socialist solution will be taken for granted.

The difficulty is that the Socialists' solutions of side issues too often presuppose the wholesale admission of their fundamental doctrine, for which not everybody is prepared. Six or seven months before the election, Jaurès had promised, in the grandiloquent language of which he is a master, to submit to the coming Chamber a "*vaste texte législatif*," a sort of code of the future *Civitas*, which would bring Socialist theories down to the parliamentary level. The work had been planned, he said, by some of his friends, and was nearly complete. M. Clémenceau, after hearing with good-humored irony the attacks made by Jaurès on his *bourgeois* policy, insisted on obtaining definite information as to various consequences apparently entailed by the Socialist programme. For instance, M. Jaurès advocated the nationalization of railways and mines, and, generally, of the industrial property held until now by large companies: did he mean that the proprietors thus ousted were entitled to some sort of compensation or not? To this embarrassing question M. Jaurès refused at first to give an answer; after a few days, he said that, if compensation should ever be given, it must be in the Socialist currency, *i. e.*, the tickets representing articles of daily necessity, and not the worthless gold they are intended to supersede. This, being interpreted in the flippant language of the present *Civitas*, amounted to nothing better than "monkey's coin"; and it appeared once more that the Socialist reconstruction was likely to be effected by force, and not through sweet reasonableness. Clémenceau exploded his opponent's fallacies one after the other, and he did so without sparing the cutting sarcasm which has made him so formidable in ten successive Parliaments.

At the end of his speech, very little remained of the Socialist leader's address, beyond the general statement that nothing has been done so far for the working classes, that the efforts of Parliament ought to be directed to industrial and economic questions, and that the adjustment of rights and wrongs can only be slow and progressive, and must be the work of experience rather than of debates and of theories. Social questions, then, will henceforward be the order of the day.

Will they be dealt with according to the Socialists' quick-working methods, or, on the contrary, given up to a majority of rich men, whose chief anxiety seems to have been, above all, to keep them in the background? The division of the Chamber, at the conclusion of Clémenceau's address, leaves no room for doubting that the day of the Socialist party has not dawned yet. The majority in favor of the Minister numbered upwards of four hundred—one of the largest on record; and it appears evident that the Radical-Socialists, in spite of their name and programme, will follow the leadership of Clémenceau, not of Jaurès.

The Minister of the Interior may have no exceptional title to the name of "statesman"—what man ever had who took office for the first time at the age of sixty-five?—but he undoubtedly belies the notion that an ironist, with a tendency to point out, above all, the absurd or impossible sides of a policy, finds himself powerless the moment he has to meet the difficulties of government. M. Clémenceau's weakness is probably to think government easy, and to regard as dunces some of his predecessors who plodded through the work he himself does offhand. But the light and easy manner which he has carried from literature into the exercise of power does not prevent his being a dexterous, keen-sighted and rather masterful Minister. To all intents and purposes, it is he and not M. Sarrien who is the head of the Cabinet, and he showed himself quite equal to the task on two difficult occasions, viz.: the general election, which he conducted with adroitness and a proper degree of cynicism, and the beginning of the session, when, as I have just said, he managed to rob M. Jaurès of his programme without committing himself to his methods.

Since then he has gone to work, as he said he would, and has succeeded in passing an Income Tax Bill, which is a first step in the way of practical reforms. As a net result of two months' parliamentary work it is remarkable, and more than has ever been

achieved in the same length of time. While the Bill was under discussion, the Old Age Pension Bill was gradually being brought into working order, and there is every reason to hope that this great democratic measure will henceforward be something better than a platform commonplace or a chapter of "Utopia" in statistics and figures. The long-despaired-of Bill enforcing a weekly holiday for workmen was also passed. The numberless difficulties attending its regular enforcement have not been cleared away yet by the Council of State, and may be, for many years to come, in the way of its general application; but, wherever those difficulties are not insuperable, the Act will be given a chance. It may be rather hard that a democracy should have had to wait so long for such preeminently democratic reforms, but there is comfort in the notion that a few weeks or months were sufficient to bring them into existence at last. M. Clémenceau may boast that, had it not been for him, they would probably be still looked upon as impossibilities by the very men in his majority who spoke of them as measures of the first importance.

Improvement meaning expense, M. Clémenceau would be badly off if he were not supported by an able Minister of Finance. M. Poincaré happens to be the very man he wants. Like his colleague, M. Poincaré has a wider outlook than the ordinary politician. He is a *connoisseur* in literature and philosophy, and an excellent writer. He is a sober, cool-headed orator, with a good deal of intellectual austerity under his graceful manner, and a sworn foe to vagueness and pretence. The habit of Ministers of Finance was to deny deficits, and dress up balances as much as appeared necessary to secure a favorable vote. M. Poincaré has given up the practice. On the eve of the election he owned to a deficit of over two hundred million francs; and he had nothing to say against the Old Age Pension Fund if the Chamber allowed him to raise yearly an extra sixty-five million francs where they could be found.

This honest policy seems likely to exclude every other where politics are superseded by redistribution of property. At any rate, the Chamber must have realized that no other was possible, as there is no golden mean between Mr. Jaurès's confiscations and M. Poincaré's new taxes, and they have given the Minister full leave to scrape together his sixty-five millions as best he can. The task is not easy. The French have been overburdened ever

since they had to pay the Prussian war indemnity, and the chief danger to the Republic is a comparison that will often recur between the light Budgets of the Second Empire and the heavy ones to which we have been accustomed since. The least addition to the taxes is often resented by the very classes in whose behalf it is made, and the common workman is well aware that his bread may depend on the millionaire's indulgence in luxury. M. Poincaré seems to have partly succeeded in filling his exchequer without creating too much anxiety. There will be a duty on works of art and curios, and another—which, unfortunately, is only an anticipation of the Income Tax Act—on exchange operations. Moreover, M. Poincaré is going to seek two other sources of revenue in quarters likely to please the Socialists. Five thousand men of the Colonial troops will be disbanded, and the transfer of property through collateral inheritance will be liable to a duty of thirty per cent. instead of twelve. This means the complete absorption by the state of property, not in the direct line, within four generations, and the Socialists could hardly demand a more stringent measure. It cannot be very popular, and M. Poincaré wound up the speech in which he demonstrated the necessity of this tax with a pathetic appeal to the patriotism of the taxpayers and a promise to establish a special scale in favor of smaller fortunes.

All this is very clear. It seems evident that France, after being for some years dragged into the groove of the social and economic reforms which are the chief interest of cultivated men, from America to Germany and from England to Japan, is at present growing conscious of the advisability of this policy.

But even this higher view of politics has its danger, and may be occasionally dimmed by old prejudices. It has been often said that the French nation cares much more for equality than for liberty, and the history of the past century certainly bears out the observation. When they speak of equality, the French unfortunately nearly always mean levelling. The new departure we are witnessing may result, nay, must some day result, in bettering the general conditions of life; but a high ideal does not always meet with its immediate reward, and prudence and wisdom should accompany it. So much has been said by the Socialists and echoed by the Radicals concerning the necessity of improving the condition of the working classes, and, by hook or by crook, enlisting rich citizens in the work, that some capital has been frightened

out of France. M. Poincaré acknowledged the fact in the tribune. Several milliards have crossed the frontier, and will naturally be employed by Swiss, Belgian and Italian bankers in Swiss, Belgian and Italian enterprises. The threats of a more or less immediate nationalization of the French railways is sure to encourage a migratory movement in the direction of American railways, which is, so far, more spoken of than really visible, but will become a fact the moment the capitalist who is not a professional financier becomes used to a foreign check-book. No purpose can be gained by impoverishing a country, and France is certainly ceasing to be the large bank with the millions of small safes that it used to be. The staunch Socialist is blind to these ominous symptoms, because his dream shows him countries always too large for their inhabitants, but a financier like M. Poincaré sees the danger and points it out with an outspokenness that bespeaks its seriousness.

These are some hopeful signs that the French politician will become practical by dealing at last with practical affairs. The "*Matin*" published some time ago an article in which M. Pelletan, the most obdurate of pure politicians, took a mischievous pleasure in showing that the Income Tax Act framed by the Minister of Finance was unworkable. But the public took this for what it was, literature, and paid much more attention to the articles devoted to the Custom House differences with Spain and Switzerland, and to another by M. Caillaux, in which this very able financier and ex-Minister demonstrated that real disarmament is much more the suppression of underhand tariff wars than the reduction of some items in the War Budget. Such a statement, only a year ago, would have been perfectly unintelligible to the newspaper reader, and we must be improving. Political peace will certainly help social wisdom, but wisdom has never been more necessary.

WASHINGTON, August, 1906.

DURING President Roosevelt's temporary relief from the cares though not from the responsibilities of administration, the principal topics of political discussion in the Federal capital have been the impression made by Secretary Root on the Latin-American peoples; the elaborate preparations made in many States to welcome Mr. William J. Bryan on his return from foreign parts; and the contest going on between the two chief political parties for the control of State Legislatures and Executives and

of the next Federal House of Representatives. There is no doubt that the success of Mr. Root's visit to South America has transcended expectations. That the head of our State Department, justly regarded as Mr. Roosevelt's principal adviser, should have traversed thousands of miles of ocean in a United States war-ship to meet personally and confer with the leaders of public opinion in Latin-American republics was rightly looked upon as an unprecedented compliment, deserving of the most cordial recognition. What might have proved, however, only an interesting interchange of courtesies seems likely to have a profound and lasting international significance. In Brazil, to be sure, the temper of the public men and of the people at large was known to be already favorable to the friendliest relations with the United States. We have never had any trouble with the Brazilians, either when they were the subjects of an empire, or since they have adopted a republican régime. As the descendants of Portuguese who have never loved the Spaniards, the Brazilians viewed with indifference or complacency the discomfiture of Spain in our recent contest with that Power, and, constituting as they do a strong and prosperous nation, thoroughly qualified to meet its obligations, they have no reason to resent the Roosevelt deduction from the Monroe Doctrine, which would impose upon us the duty of intervening, by the assumption of the revenue-collecting function, between weak and indebted American commonwealths and their European creditors. There is another fact conducive to an amicable understanding, namely, that our country is the largest consumer of Brazil's coffee, and one of the best customers for her hides and rubber. There was every reason, therefore, sentimental and commercial, why Mr. Root should look forward to a hearty, and even effusive, reception in the Brazilian capital. Whatever he may have hoped for, it was more than fulfilled. It is doubtful whether any visitor to Rio de Janeiro ever evoked, or could evoke, a more fervent and imposing demonstration of good-will. As festivity followed festivity during the days of his sojourn, he was made to feel that he, personally, and the country which he represented, possessed not only the esteem and respect, but the confidence, of the Brazilian people. That the confidence was well deserved he proved by a series of speeches well adapted to set forth the community of sentiment and interest welding together American republics, and to allay misgivings, if any such

existed, concerning the possible wish of the United States to assert a species of protectorate over less powerful neighbors in the Western Hemisphere. In those speeches, freighted with good sense and instinct with sincerity, the Secretary seems to have builded better than perhaps he knew. Addressed primarily to Brazilians, they were made known by telegraph to Spanish-American capitals, and had an auspicious effect on the attitude of those cities toward the approaching American visitor.

When Mr. Root's tour was contemplated, it was pointed out that, while he was certain to be treated in Uruguay, Argentina and Chile with the ostensible civility due to his official station, he might be disappointed if he reckoned on a genuine and ardent exhibition of popular trust and liking toward a spokesman of the great republic of the North. Spanish-speaking Americans cannot help seeing in the United States the possessor of Florida and of the vast Louisiana Territory, which once belonged to Spain. They cannot but see in us the Power which less than sixty years ago deprived Mexico of Texas and California. With our resolve to give Cuba independence they could not but sympathize, but they would have been unfilial, could they have surveyed unmoved the quick and irresistible blows by which we forced their mother country to give up Porto Rico and the Philippines, and to drink to the dregs the cup of humiliation. In their case, moreover, there is no strong motive of commercial self-interest to counter-balance suspicion of our purposes. From Uruguay and Argentina we take some of their hides and wool, but their other products find our own commodities competitors in the British market. Then, again, it is precisely the feebleness of Spanish-American commonwealths that have most to dread from Mr. Roosevelt's assumption that, in spite of the Monroe Doctrine, European creditors have a right to enforce upon American debtors by an appeal to arms the payment of debts arising out of contract. Mr. Roosevelt's offer to avert possibly calamitous applications of that principle by interposing for the purpose of collecting customs revenue and apportioning it equitably between a defaulting debtor-republic and its European creditors could hardly be expected to impress the jurists of Montevideo and Buenos Aires, who uphold, and wish to see incorporated in international law, the doctrine that contractual obligations are not enforceable by a resort to war. For all these reasons, those familiar with the real feeling entertained

by Spanish-speaking Americans for the United States were disposed beforehand to regard with some uneasiness, if not anxiety, the prolongation of Mr. Root's tour beyond Rio de Janeiro. Happily, all such apprehensions have been belied, and the wisdom of the tour has been vindicated amply, for misunderstandings have been cleared away, and the bonds of friendship and fraternity have been riveted.

How long the boom of Mr. Bryan for the next Democratic nomination for the Presidency will last, nobody pretends to predict. It is certain that there are as yet no signs of its culmination, much less of its collapse. State Convention after State Convention in the West has endorsed his candidacy. It is true, indeed, that these impressive proofs of present popular favor are given almost two years before the meeting of the Democratic National Convention, and are in no wise binding on that body. Mindful of this fact, some of Mr. Bryan's more sagacious friends have expressed regret that he did not postpone his home-coming for about a twelvemonth. For by such a prolonged period of absence he would lessen the ground for reproaching him with persistent office-seeking, would make the ultimate outpour of public sentiment in his favor seem more spontaneous, and—what is most important—would free himself from the temptation of posing as a national "boss," and interfering in local disputes. He has already made what, from a view-point of policy, should possibly be accounted the mistake of calling upon Mr. Sullivan to resign the post of national committeeman for Illinois. Whether or no Mr. Bryan is right in holding the St. Louis Convention unjustified in seating the Hopkins-Sullivan delegation, it might have been judicious and expedient for him to wait and let that act be reversed and condemned by the Democracy assembled in convention two years hence.

As regards this year's political campaign, interest is settled mainly on the contests in Maine, Iowa, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York. Nobody believes that the Republicans can be beaten in Massachusetts, inasmuch as the Stand-Patters, although they control the party organization, are astute enough to put forward again for the Governorship a tariff-revisionist. In Maine, except in the district represented in Congress by Mr. Charles E. Littlefield, who is vehemently opposed by the Federation of Labor, the fight turned on the question whether prohibition of the

manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages should be expunged from the State Constitution, or allowed to remain in it. In Iowa some of the newspaper organs of the Stand-Patters, who were beaten by Governor Cummins the other day in the State Convention, are calling upon their readers to support the Democratic nominee. As between two revisionists, they say, they prefer the straight goods to blended. Enormous as was the plurality given by Iowa to Mr. Roosevelt in 1904 (upwards of 158,000), it is conceivable that the bolt of the Stand-Patters may acquire sufficient proportions to prevent the reelection of Governor Cummins. It was, we may recall, with the aid of many Republican votes, that a Democratic nominee, Mr. Horace Boies, was made Governor of Iowa some sixteen years ago. In Ohio, although no Governor is to be chosen this year, it will be worth while to note whether, in the election of other State officers, the Democracy's candidates can obtain something like the plurality which their nominee for the Governorship secured in 1905 in spite of the fact that Mr. Roosevelt had swept that commonwealth by more than 255,000 only a twelvemonth before. The situation in Pennsylvania is also interesting. The Keystone State gave Mr. Roosevelt in 1904 the astounding plurality of 505,000; yet only a twelvemonth later the Democratic nominee for State Treasurer was elected with the aid of the votes of Republican reformers. A similar fusion exists this year, only now it is a Republican reformer, Mr. Lewis Emery, who is endorsed by the Democrats for the Governorship. There is this difference, too, that, last year, the Prohibitionists were included in the coalition against the nominee of the regular Republican organization, while this summer they have brought out a candidate of their own. After all, however, the attention of the nation seems likely to be concentrated on the contest for the Governorship in the State of New York, which has often been doubtful in non-Presidential years. At the hour when we write it seems certain that there will be three candidates in the field, namely, the nominee of the Republican Convention, who will be either Governor Higgins or Mr. Charles E. Hughes (who carried out the investigation of life-insurance companies); Mr. W. R. Hearst, who will be put forward by his own organization, the Independence League; and the nominee of the regular Democratic Convention, who, it now seems probable, will be Mr. William Travers Jerome.